



THE  
CONNOISSEUR.

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CRITIC and CENSOR-GENERAL.

NUMBER XLIV.

THURSDAY, November 28, 1754.

*Des nominis hujus honorem.*

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LATELY took a survey of the Female World, as CENSOR GENERAL; and upon a strict review was very much surprized to find that there is scarce any Woman to be met with, except among the lowest of the vulgar. The sex consists almost entirely of LADIES. Every *Joan* is lifted into a Lady; and the maid and the mistress are equally dignified with this polite title. The stage-coaches are constantly filled with Ladies—At *Bartholomew Fair* there is always a hop for the Ladies—And if the Ladies in the drawing-room are employed at Whist, their last night's cards are made use of in a rubber by the Ladies in the steward's room; while the other Ladies of the family are staking their halfpence at Put or All-Fours in the kitchen.—

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kitchen.—In a word, whenever there is occasion to speak of the Female World, honourable mention is always made of them by the respectful appellation of *The LADIES*: as the young and the old, the black and the brown, the homely and the handsome, are all complaisantly included under the general title of *The FAIR*.

SINCE therefore the Ladies of *Great Britain* make up so numerous a body, I should be loth to disoblige so considerable a sister-hood, and shall devote this paper entirely to their service. I propose at present to marshal them into their respective ranks, and upon a review I find that they may be justly distributed under these five divisions; *viz.* Married Ladies, Maiden or Young Ladies, Ladies of Quality, Fine Ladies, and lastly (without affront to the good company) Ladies of Pleasure.

I SHALL begin with the Married Ladies, as this order will be found to be far the most numerous, and includes all the married women in town or country above the degree of a chair-woman or the trundler of a wheel-barrow. The plain old *English* word Wife has long been discarded in our conversation, as being only fit for the broad mouths of the vulgar. A well-bred ear is startled at the very sound of Wife, as at a coarse and indelicate expression; and I appeal to any fashionable couple, whether they would not be as much ashamed to be mentioned together as man and wife, as they would to appear together at court in a farthingale and trunk-breeches. From *Hyde Park Corner* to *Temple-Bar* this monster of a Wife has not been heard of since the antiquated times of *Dame and Your Worship*; and in the city every good house-wife is at least a *Lady of the other end of the town*. In the country you might as well dispute the pretensions of every foxhunter to the

the title of Esquire, as of his help-mate to that of Lady; and in every corporation town whoever matches with a burgher becomes a Lady by right of charter. My cousin VILLAGE, (from whom I have all my rural intelligence,) informs me, that upon the strictest enquiry there is but one Wife in the town where he now lives, and that is the Parson's Wife, who is never mentioned by the country Ladies but as a dowdy, and an old-fashioned creature. Such is the great privilege of matrimony, that every female is ennobled by changing her surname: for as every unmarried woman is a Miss, every married one by the same courtesy is a Lady.

THE next order of dignified females is composed of Maiden or Young Ladies; which terms are synonymous, and are indifferently applied to females of the age of fourteen or threescore. We must not therefore be surprized to hear of Maiden Ladies, who are known to have had several children, or to meet with Young Ladies that look like old dowagers. At the house of an acquaintance where I lately visited, I was told that we were to expect Mrs. *Jackson* and the two Miss *Wrinkles*. But what was my surprize! when I saw on their arrival a blooming female of twenty-five accosted under the first denomination, and the two nymphs, as I expected, come tottering into the room, the youngest of them to all appearance on the verge of threescore. I could not help wishing on this occasion that some middle term was invented between *Miss* and *Mrs.* to be adopted, at a certain age, by all females not inclined to matrimony. For surely nothing can be more ridiculous, than to hear a greyhaired Lady pass her Grand Climacteric mentioned in terms, that convey the idea of youth and beauty, or perhaps of a bib and hanging-sleeves. This indiscriminate appellation also unavoidably creates much confusion;

confusion : I know an eminent tradesman who lost a very good customer for innocently writing *Mrs.* — at the head of her bill : and I was lately at a ball, where, trusting to a friend for a partner, I was obliged to do penance with an old withered beldam, who hobbled through several country dances with me, though she was ancient enough to have been my grandmother. Excluding these Young Ladies of fifty and sixty, this order of females is very numerous ; for there is scarce a girl in town or country, superior to a milk-maid or cinderwench, but is comprehended in it. The daughters are indisputably Young Ladies, though their Papas may be tradesmen or mechanics. For the present race of shopkeepers &c. have wisely provided, that their gentility shall be preserved in the female part of the family. Thus, although the son is called plain *Jack*, and perhaps bound apprentice to his father, the daughter is taught to hold up her head, make tea in the little parlour behind the shop, and inherits the title of Lady from her Mama. To make these claims to dignity more sure those excellent seminaries of genteel education, called Boarding-Schools, have been contrived ; where instead of teasing a sampler, or conning a chapter of the bible, the Young Ladies are instructed to hold up their heads, make a curtsy, and to behave themselves in every respect like pretty little Ladies. Hence it happens, that we may often observe several of these polite damsels in the skirts of *White-Chapel*, and in every petty country town ; nay, it is common to meet with Young Ladies *born and bred*, who have submitted to keep a chandler's shop, or had humility enough even to go to service.

I PROCEED next to take into consideration what is generally understood by Ladies of Quality. These in other words may be more properly called Ladies of Fashion ; for in the modish acceptation of the phrase not so much regard

gard is had to their birth or station, or even to their coronet, as to their way of life. The dutchess, who has not taste enough to act up to the character of a Person of Quality, is no more respected in the polite world than a city knight's Lady; nor does she derive any greater honour from her title, than the hump-backed woman receives from the vulgar. But what is immediately expected from a Lady of Quality, will be seen under the next article: for to their praise be it spoken, most of our modern Ladies of Quality affect to be Fine Ladies.

To describe the life of a Fine Lady would be only to set down a perpetual round of visiting, gaming, dressing, and intriguing. She has been bred up in the notion of making a figure, and of recommending herself as a woman of spirit: for which end she is always foremost in the fashion, and never fails gracing with her appearance every public assembly, and every party of pleasure. Though single, she may coquet with every fine gentleman; or if married, she may admit of gallantries without reproach, and even receive visits from the men in her bed-chamber. To complete the character, and to make her a Very Fine Lady, she should be celebrated for her wit and beauty, and be parted from her husband: for as matrimony itself is not meant as a restraint upon a pleasure, a separate maintenance is understood as a licence to throw off even the appearance of virtue.

FROM the Fine Ladies it is a very natural transition to the Ladies of Pleasure; and indeed from what has already been said concerning Fine Ladies one might imagine that, as they make pleasure their sole pursuit, they might properly be entitled Ladies of Pleasure. But this gay appellation is reserved for the higher rank of Prostitutes, whose

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principal difference from the Fine Ladies consists in their professing a trade, which the others carry on by smuggling. A Lady of Fashion, who refuses no favours but the last, or even grants that without being paid for it, is not to be accounted a Lady of Pleasure, but ranks in an order formerly celebrated under the title of *DEMI-REPS*. It is whimsical enough to see the different complexions assumed by the same vice, according to the difference of stations. The married Lady of Quality may intrigue with as many as she pleases, and still remain *Right Honourable*: The draggle-tailed Street-Walker is a *Common Woman*, and liable to be sent to *Bridewell*; but the Whore of High Life is a *Lady of Pleasure*, and rolls in a gilt chariot.

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